

Lingering

by parasolghost

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Summary: Everyday was a routine for Jack-wake up, talk to Hiccup, wait for him to get home from work, bother the cat, hassle Hiccup about the state of his health, kiss him goodnight, rinse, and repeat. It's been like this for a year now. Yet, there was something different about today... Something hauntingly different that involved waves of nostalgia and a bouquet of flowers.

Lingering

Everyday was the same for Jack. He'd wake up at promptly 6 AM to the sound of Hiccup's alarm clock blaring in his ear. He'd get up and nudge Hiccup and softly tell him that it was time to get up, to which Hiccup groaned and pulled the blanket closer to him, shivering a bit. Jack would shrug and head for the living room, where he stared out one of the windows with a bored expression until he heard Hiccup leap to his feet and swear loudly thirty minutes later from the other room. Jack would laugh to himself and peek into their bedroom to see Hiccup throwing on his clothes as quickly as he could and grabbing his bag and a slice of toast before darting out the door. Jack would say his salutations and Hiccup would be gone in a matter of minutes. Then Jack would spend all day reading old books, staring out the window, and teasing the cat until 6:30 PM, when Hiccup would trudge into the house with bags under his eyes and a hand running through his hair. Jack would rush to the door to meet him, stepping lightly and quickly over the floor, almost as if floating, and fuss over the state of his health. Of course, Hiccup would never listen. Jack supposed that Hiccup had always been pretty stubborn anyway.

Yet, Jack noted, there was something that felt a bit different today. He couldn't really tell what it was, but it was there. This time, when Jack awoke, Hiccup was already up and out of bed, pulling his clothes on calmly and quietly.

"Someone's up early," Jack said, yawning and turning to his

side.

Hiccup glanced at the calendar that hung on the bedroom door and gave it a small smile as he buckled his belt. "Well, today's a big day."

"Really?" Jack asked yawning as Hiccup left the bedroom. Jack headed down the hallway to see Hiccup pouring out a bowl of cereal for himself. Their black cat, Toothless, who had a passive aggressive attitude towards Jack for the longest time after Hiccup adopted him, rubbed against Hiccup's leg, meowing for food. "Anymore food in that belly of yours and you'll be rolling around Hiccup's feet," Jack teased, kneeling down to poke the cat in the belly. Toothless hissed and bat a paw at Jack's hand.

"Woah there, bud," Hiccup said, scooping up the cat. "I'll get your food in a sec, just hold on."

"I told you that we should keep him in a cage," Jack said pointedly, sticking his tongue out at Toothless, who narrowed his eyes at him.

Jack sat himself lightly on the couch in the living room, tilting his head back to watch Hiccup as he washed his dishes. Toothless padded over to the couch cushion next to Jack and began eyeing him suspiciously. Jack chuckled and reached out to scratch Toothless behind the ears, only to change his mind and pull his hand back with a frown. He groaned in frustration and ran a hand through his striking white hair. He grimaced at Toothless apologetically. "Sorry, I guess not today, huh?"

Jack's moment of chagrin was interrupted when Hiccup joined him on the couch, placing Toothless in his lap and taking a seat on the vinyl cushion. Jack watched Hiccup as he scratched Toothless' back with a dull expression on his face. Jack frowned as he noticed the bags under his eyes had become deeper than ever before.

Hiccup slouched in his seat, sighing in exasperation and ruffling his own brown hair. "Gods, it's going to be a long dayâ€¦"

"Well, you always get through it anyway," Jack said reassuringly. "You always push through even when the going gets toughâ€¦"that's what I love about you, Hic," Jack smiled, giving him a light peck on the cheek.

Hiccup shot back up into a straight sitting position in surprise, patting his freckled cheek gingerly before turning in Jack's direction and chuckling, his face red with embarrassment. Suddenly, Hiccup's awkward smile softened and Jack thought he saw Hiccup light up for just a secondâ€¦"something he hadn't been seeing in months.

"Can you believe it's been a whole five years since we started dating?" Hiccup said. Jack stared back at Hiccup in confusion for a second, before following Hiccup's gaze to see the picture frame that sat behind him on a coffee table. Within the decoration of vines that adorned the frame was an old picture of the both of them on what Jack remembered on their first date.

Jack was holding up the camera, smiling widely, his cheeks tinged

with pink and he held Hiccup closely to him. Hiccup looked rather abashed, yet extremely pleased. A red blush seemed to overtake his freckles as Hiccup smiled sheepishly into the camera. They were both sharing a light blue scarf (one of Jack's). In the background of their gleeful portrait were odd corners of freshly fallen snow that dappled the ground and parts of bare branches.

"Five years? Is that really it?" Jack chuckled as Hiccup leaned over to grab the picture from its stand. Jack leaned closer to Hiccup as they both stared at it together. "It can't have been just five yearsâ€¦ It feels like your freckly butt has been bothering me forever."

"Well, maybe not five years exactly," Hiccup laughed as he scratched Toothless' chin with his free hand, earning a purr from the satisfied feline. "I think I had the biggest crush on you for about two years before you asked me out."

"Ugh, I don't even want to talk about that," Jack groaned, burying his face in his hands in embarrassment.

"It was the funniest thing, though," Hiccup said with a calm smile. "You looked so nervous and I don't think I've seen so many cups of coffee spilled by one person in my life."

"Hey, I was trying to be smooth," Jack objected. "I bought us coffee and I trippedâ€¦ Two or three times, okay?"

"It wasn't even smooth," Hiccup laughed. "Not even a little bit."

"Don't make me nip your nose, Hic," Jack threatened teasingly as Hiccup giggled. "I'll do itâ€¦ don't test me."

Jack's teasing and Hiccup's laughter was interrupted when the sound of the doorbell echoed throughout the house. Toothless meowed and leapt off of Hiccup's lap as the brunette got up. Jack followed Hiccup to the front door. Behind which stood Astrid, her blonde hair neatly styled in the back of her head with her usual French braid.

"Well, if it isn't Astrid Hofferson," Jack said, greeting her with a mocking bow. "What brings you here?"

"Hey, Hiccup," she said, her face straight. "Are you ready to go?"

"Still as cold as usual, I see," Jack said with an affected sigh, wiping a fake tear from his blue eyes.

"Yeah, uh," Hiccup said, moving aside to let Astrid in. "It looks kind of cold out there, do you think I should grab a scarf?"

"Well, considering the fact that it's the middle of December and it's been freezing since last month, I'd say you should probably need one," Astrid smirked. "But who knows? I could be wrong."

Jack and Hiccup chuckled and Hiccup closed the door behind her. "Alright, just hold tight and I'll be back in just a sec." Jack followed Astrid to the couch as Hiccup dashed down the hallway in a

hurry.

"So are any of you gonna say what all of this is about any time soon?" Jack asked her, leaning over the back of the couch as Astrid sat down in front of him.

Astrid offered no response and just looked around the room in silence, scratching Toothless' head when he rubbed himself against his leg. "This place is absolutely spotless," Astrid mumbled.

"Yeah," Jack frowned. "I think Hiccup's been doing that anxious cleaning thing he always doesâ€¦ It's starting to worry me a bit."

Hiccup emerged from behind the hallway with a brown trench coat on and a familiar light blue scarf. "Alright, let's go."

"Aw, someone's feeling a bit sentimental today, aren't they?" Jack teased. Yet, he felt emotion well up inside of him as nostalgia flooded over him like a tidal wave.

Astrid scrutinized the scarf for a minute before recognition flickered on her face. She gave Hiccup a small smile before holding the door open for him. Jack followed the two as they walked out the door and quickly slipped into Astrid's car as Hiccup held one of the back doors open. They backed out of the driveway and Jack stared at Hiccup, who absentmindedly began rubbing the fabric of the scarf between his fingers, a blank stare on his face as Astrid backed out of the driveway.

The three were enveloped in an awkward silence. Astrid's eyes were fixed on the road ahead of them; Hiccup was staring out the window, still rubbing together the fabric of the scarf tenderly; and Jack, well, Jack was watching Hiccup.

"â€¦Hiccup?" Astrid finally spoke up, clearing her throat in an attempt to disperse the awkward silence.

"Huh, what?" Hiccup jumped back into reality, looking around the car's leather seats as if he had just woken from a dream and couldn't remember what he was doing. "Oh, uh, yeah?"

"Haveâ€¦ have you been anxious-cleaning again?"

There was a moment of silence before Hiccup answered tentatively. "Yeah, so?"

"Nothing really," Astrid lied. "I mean, it's great that you found an outlet that doesn't harm you, but it's been a whole yearâ€¦ Don't you think it's time that youâ€¦"

"Can we stop at that flower shop for a quick minute?" Hiccup interrupted her, feigning his own ignorance towards her words. Astrid opened her mouth to object to Hiccup's obvious attempts to ignore her concerns, but then quickly changed her mind and pulled into one of the empty parking spaces. Astrid turned off the engine and the both of them slipped out of the car in silence, Jack following closely behind Hiccup.

And as they walked across the parking lot into the small shop, Jack watched Hiccup even more closely than ever, concern etched upon his face. His curiosity egged him to ask Hiccup to just tell him what this entire trip was about, but he knew it was useless.

Astrid and Hiccup shuffled through the door and Jack quickly slid through the opening before the door closed, only to have the door shut on his fingers, which he pulled out as quickly as he can, a haunted, rather than pained, look on his face as he stared at his fingers for a second. He shook his head before bounding after Hiccup, who was slowly looking through the rows and rows of flowers that adorned the shop. He skimmed over the colorful and cheerful arrays and seemed to pause for a minute before the straight blue flowers, only to move away when he figured they weren't what he wanted.

Jack raised an eyebrow at him curiously before going ahead of him, skimming the aisles quickly before stopping right before an interesting bouquet that caught his eye. The flowers were white with layers and layers of petals piled on top of each other. The flowers were blooming—something that Jack wasn't used to seeing this late in the year. Jack stared at the flowers with an intense curiosity before the sound of footsteps next to him snapped him back to reality.

He turned to see Hiccup, scrutinizing the very same flowers with a small smile on his face. A tall, grey-haired employee walked by and Hiccup looked up.

"Um, excuse me," Hiccup called. "What are these?"

The shopkeeper turned and, at a closer look, Jack could see some rather interesting tattoos that adorned his arms. He was even more surprised when the shopkeeper began speaking in an Australian accent. "Oh, you've got a good eye, mate. Those are winter camellias. Odd buggers—they only bloom in the winter."

Hiccup examined the flowers for a minute and his lips curved into a small smile. "I'll take a dozen of these, please." The employee nodded and reached out to count out the flowers as Hiccup headed towards the counter. Jack followed him with a grin on his face.

"You know me so well," Jack mused with a pleased expression as Hiccup paid for his flowers.

They were joined at the door by Astrid, who had been gazing at some colorful bouquets in the front. Astrid looked at the bouquet and gave him a small smile. "I think he'd like those a lot."

"Yeah, I think so, too," Hiccup said as they walked towards the car. Jack felt a shiver run up his spine as he got into the car. He began to have suspicions about what this was all about. The white-haired young man was quiet throughout the entire ride and took to gazing out the window, his frown getting deeper every time they passed a familiar-looking landmark.

"I should've stayed home," Jack sighed as they came to a stop in a parking lot. Nevertheless, as Hiccup and Astrid got out of the car, Jack found himself following suit. He stepped out of the car to see rows and rows of flat, gray stones lined up in the distance. Jack felt a lump in his throat and tried to clear it by gulping. Of

course, this only made him more nervous.

"We should probably just go back. This is some horror movie shit right here," Jack laughed nervously. Neither of them responded and continued walking towards the graves. Jack sighed and quickened his pace before stopping a few feet in front of them. "C'mon, guys," Jack said, desperation evident in his voice. "Let's just go."

Jack felt a freezing sensation that made the hairs on the back of his neck stand up as Hiccup and Astrid walked right through him. No, not past through. Jack felt a mixture of lost and confused as he seemed to disconnect with the world for a second only to be pulled back unceremoniously. He gasped for breath as if he had just emerged from the depths of the ocean and his eyes were wide with shock. Jack patted himself, making sure he was really there, and gazed down at his hands.

His hands were translucent—actually, his entire body was translucent. It was a little unclear, with his pigments still somewhat there and all, but he could see the gravel of the sidewalk right through his hands. Jack lifted his head and turned, still wide-eyed, towards Hiccup and Astrid, who had stopped just two feet behind him.

"Did you feel that," Astrid asked, her hands rubbing against her arms in an attempt to warm them up. "I can't tell if that was a freak gust of wind or something else. I mean, we are in a cemetery."

"I don't think that was a gust of wind," Hiccup said with some hesitation, a curious look in his eye. "It felt sort of familiar."

Astrid raised an eyebrow at him and Hiccup gave her a nervous laugh. "Never mind—I guess I'm just feeling a bit superstitious right now. I mean there's no way—" Hiccup looked at his feet sheepishly and coughed into his hand. "Let's— Let's just go."

And they both walked off, Hiccup's long scarf trailing behind him. Jack reached out to grab it only to have it completely pass through his hand. Jack stared at them for a while before smiling sadly to himself.

"I guess I just forget sometimes," Jack said sheepishly to no one in particular, scratching the back of his neck in an odd private embarrassment as he watched Astrid and Hiccup turn past a row of headstones.

Jack followed them and found them stopping in the middle of a row of graves—and he had a sinking feeling that he knew who's grave it was.

Jack headed over to the two, who were standing in solemnly, and peeked at the headstone, which read "Jackson Overland Frost" in large letters.

"I still think it's a little old fashioned to get an entire grave," Jack said with a half-hearted laugh.

Of course, Astrid and Hiccup paid no heed to his words and just stood there in awkward silence. Jack itched to make a commotion, but knew

that anything he did would go largely unnoticed.

"Do you want me to leave you alone for a while?" Astrid finally said, breaking the silence. Hiccup gave her an appreciative nod and she placed a comforting hand on his shoulder. "I'll be back in the car, so just take your time." And with a click of her heels, she was gone.

Jack and Hiccup sat there for a bit, with one not even aware of the presence of the other. Jack gazed at him curiously and expectantly as Hiccup fidgeted with the bouquet of winter hydrangeas that he held.

"Soâ€¦ I guess it's been exactly a whole year already," Hiccup chuckled diffidently, looking down at the grave. "A lot has happened since you've been gone."

"No kidding," Jack said with a pained smile, taking a seat on top of his grave and looking up at Hiccup.

"I got a promotion," Hiccup began, "and Astrid got me a car for my birthday. She told me that you guys were saving up for a while to get me one."

"Well, hey, you try buying a car with a lousy minimum wage job," Jack said in mock anger, a sad smile still plastered on his face.

"And I finally went to get Toothless spayed," Hiccup laughed. Jack joined in on the laughter as he remembered the day, a few months ago, when Hiccup and Toothless came home with a cone wrapped around the feline's furry black head.

"He wouldn't stop whining for days," they said in unison, laughing to themselves.

"Andâ€¦" Hiccup began again, his eyes beginning to well-up with tears. "I think Toothless misses you, justâ€¦ a _little_ bit. Astrid misses you, tooâ€¦"hell, everyone misses you." The tears that Hiccup held in began to roll down his face, clinging to his chin and falling onto the petals of the bouquet below him. As Hiccup pressed a fist to his mouth to muffle his light sobs, Jack resisted the urge to throw his arms around him.

"I miss you, Jack," Hiccup choked out a bit, looking back up a bit to force a smile. "Gods, I miss you so much and for the longest timeâ€¦ I thought I'd just wither away to nothing without you." Hiccup put both of his hands back on the bouquet and he gave Jack a genuine smile, the look in his emerald green eyes content despite the tears that brimmed along the corners. "It's still a little hard for meâ€¦"it really is, butâ€¦ I think things are starting to look up a little more."

"Hiccup, I'm sorry," Jack managed to choke out, feeling his eyes water as Hiccup continued.

"I hope you don't feel sorryâ€¦"don't even think about it," Hiccup said a bit sternly. "I don't regret being with you at all. I'm glad we had four years together, because those were the best four years of my life," Hiccup said with a shy smile. "Sometimes it doesn't even feel like you left me."

"You don't even know the half of it," Jack laughed, cursing himself at his inability to stop tears from rolling down his face.

"Soâ€¦ Thank you," Hiccup concluded. "Thank you for everything."

Jack placed his hands on either side of Hiccup's face and slowly brought his face forward so that his lips were just millimeters away from his head. "Thank you for being you," Jack said, trying to hold back sobs. "I'm so proud of you and I wish I could have been with you longerâ€"hell, I wish you could just _see me_, " Jack cried. "I love you so much and I want you to be happy. _God_, you don't even know how much I love you."

Water seemed to pour from Jack's eyes nonstop. He wondered, for a second, where a ghost's tears go, but that moment of curiosity was immediately wiped from his mind as he continued. "I'm always with you," Jack said, a bit more calmly, "I love you so much and I am so goddamn proud of you. Thank you for making me the happiest I've ever been in my life."

Hiccup stepped back, his hair brushing through Jack's fingers as he stepped and Jack resisted the urge to reach out for him. Hiccup wiped his eyes with his sleeve and took a deep breath, before giving the grave another smile. "I, uh," Hiccup stuttered, causing Jack to be reminded strongly of their first date. "I picked these up for you," Hiccup said. He placed the flowers at Jack's feet. He looked up and took another deep breath. "I guess this is goodbye for nowâ€¦ I know they're not the best presentâ€"I mean you always told me to get you video games on this day, but," Hiccup gave the grave a tearful smile, "happy anniversary, Jack."

There was a moment of silence before Hiccup took a few steps back and turned away from the grave. Jack watched him walk away until he disappeared from sight. The white haired ghost took a deep breath and wiped away his tears, regaining his cool. "See you soon, Hic," he whispered, "but not too soon."

Jack was suddenly made aware of the presence behind him and he turned to see a darkly robed figure standing a few yards away from him. Jack groaned in exasperation before putting on his signature joker's smile.

"Only a year?" Jack whined at it. "Couldn't I linger here for a little bit longer?"

The hooded figure did not reply. Jack lowered his head and raised his hands in surrender.

"Yeah, you're right," Jack sighed in defeat, walking towards the figure, which held out a skeletal hand towards him. Jack raised his own translucent hand with hesitation before looking back at the grave where he and Hiccup last had their one-sided conversation.

"I'm sure he'll be fine," Jack said, closing his eyes. His fingertips brushed the skeletal hand and in a swirl of smoke, the two had disappeared completely, leaving no trace of evidence that they were even there in the first place.

Hiccup had gotten home an hour or so later and sat by the windowsill, his cat sitting calmly in his lap as he stared blankly out the window. His eyes widened in surprise and glee when he realized something was falling from the skyâ€”hundreds and hundreds of beautiful flakes of snow.

* * *

><p>AN: I originally uploaded this on tumblr and A03 and finally decided to upload it here as well because of all the feedback I've gotten! Sorry to any of you who thought this would be a light-hearted fic (i really doubt it because FF has the whole genre thing). But I appreciate you all greatly for reading this! Leave a review okay? u v u

End
file.